
Japan's Prime Minister Taro Aso is expected to call a general election after suffering a major defeat in local polls in Tokyo. The Prime Minister has been suffering from dismal approval ratings and open rebellion in his party. From Tokyo our correspondent Roland Buerk reports:

Japan's Prime Minister Taro Aso appears to be **jumping before he's pushed**. According to his office he's agreed with his Liberal Democratic Party and junior **coalition** partner that a general election will take place on the 30th of August. Mr Aso has been **facing open rebellion** from opponents within his party, who prefer to **oust him and face the electorate** under a new leader at a later date.

On Sunday the governing **coalition** suffered a major defeat in elections for Tokyo's Metropolitan Assembly. The local poll was widely seen as **a test of national opinion**. Japan has been **racked by a steep recession**. The Prime Minister's **gaffes** and apparent indecision have left him with approval ratings **hovering** around 20%.

If the opposition Democratic Party of Japan can take power in a general election, it would be a major **watershed** for the country. Mr Aso's Liberal Democratic Party has governed for almost all of the past half-century. But the opposition is facing its own problems. Its leader, Yukio Hatoyama, recently had to apologise after it emerged some people named as **donors** were actually dead.

Roland Buerk, BBC News, Tokyo

Vocabulary and definitions

jumping before he's pushed	leaving his job before other people force him to leave
coalition	union of different political parties for a particular purpose (here, to rule Japan)
facing open rebellion	dealing with people saying clearly and openly that they don't agree with you
oust him and face the electorate	force someone to stop doing something (here, force Aso to stop being the Prime Minister and have a general election)
a test of national opinion	a way of finding out what people in the whole country think about something
racked by a steep recession	very badly affected by a severe economic depression
gaffes	remarks that are social mistakes and not considered polite
hovering	staying at or near a particular level
watershed	an event which is important because it represents a big change in how people think about something (here, the election will change how Japanese people think about which party will rule Japan)
donors	people who give money to an organisation (here, to the opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan)

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